

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 1888

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINT PFOR CH

SUBJECT: CHINESE WILL MOURN MAO THROUGH NATIONAL DAY

REF: PEKING 1880

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. ALTHOUGH THE FORMAL PERIOD OF MOURNING FOR CHAIRMAN MAO ENDED LAST SUNDAY (SEPTEMBER 19), CHINESE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WILL CONTINUE THEIR PERSONAL MOURNING THROUGH NATIONAL DAY (OCTOBER 1) AND POSSIBLY BEYOND. CHINESE WILL DECLINE INVITATIONS TO SOCIAL FUNCTIONS, THE CUSTOMARY NATIONAL DAY RECEPTION WILL NOT BE HELD, AND FOREIGN VISITORS NOW IN CHINA APPARENTLY CAN EXPECT--AT BEST--LOW-VISIBILITY SESSIONS WITH CHINESE LEADERS. END SUMMARY

2. THE EAST GERMAN MILITARY ATTACHE, IN HIS CAPACITY AS DEAN OF THE ATTACHE CORPS, CALLED SEPTEMBER 21 AT THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS BUREAU OF THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE (MND) TO DISCUSS VARIOUS PROTOCOL QUESTIONS. SOVIET UNION AND WEST EUROPEAN DIVISION
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DIRECTOR TOLD HIM THAT ALTHOUGH OFFICIAL MOURNING FOR MAO HAD

CONCLUDED, PARTY AND GOVERNMENT UNITS IN VARIOUS LOCALITIES HAD CHOSEN TO CONTINUE THE MOURNING UNTIL "EARLY DAYS OF OCTOBER." IN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS, MND SPOKESMAN SAID THIS MEANT CHINESE OFFICIALS WOULD NOT IN THE MEANTIME TAKE PART IN SOCIAL FUNCTIONS AND THAT THERE WOULD BE NO REPEAT NO RECEPTION AT THE GREAT HALL OF THE PEOPLE THIS YEAR MARKING NATIONAL DAY. (NORMALLY SUCH A RECEPTION, ENTAILING MAJOR LEADERSHIP TURNOUT, IS HELD ON SEPTEMBER 30.) INSTEAD, NATIONAL DAY WOULD BE OBSERVED QUIETLY BY INDIVIDUAL UNITS.

3. THE PATTERN OF RECENT CHINESE ACTIVITY--OR INACTIVITY--BEARS THIS OUT. DURING THE PAST FEW DAYS THE CHINESE INVITEES FAILED TO SHOW UP, OFFERING NEITHER REGRETS NOR EXPLANATION, FOR A SCHEDULED FAREWELL TO THE FRENCH MILITARY ATTACHE AND A WEST GERMAN RECEPTION FOR A BALLET TROUPE. SUBSEQUENT INQUIRY BY THE GERMANS ELICITED THE RESPONSE "THE CHINESE ARE STILL IN MOURNING FOR CHAIRMAN MAO." CHINESE STAFF INVITED TO ATTEND AN EMBASSY FUNCTION DECLINED BECAUSE "OUR HEARTS ARE STILL HEAVY FOR CHAIRMAN MAO." (MND OFFICIALS DID SHOW UP AT AIRPORT, HOWEVER, FOR FRENCH ATTACHE'S DEPARTURE SEPTEMBER 22.)

4. THE VAST MAJORITY OF CHINESE STILL WEAR BLACK ARMBANDS. ASKED BY RESIDENT JOURNALISTS HOW LONG THEY WOULD CONTINUE TO WEAR THEM, CHINESE HAVE RESPONDED VAGUELY THAT THEY WOULD PROBABLY OBSERVE THE MOURNING PERIOD THROUGH OCTOBER 9 (PRESUMABLY MARKING THE END OF THE TRADITIONAL 30-DAY MOURNING PERIOD).

5. CHINESE HANDLING OF THE MANSFIELD AND ROWLING VISITS (REFTEL) REFLECTS A RELUCTANCE OR INABILITY TO RECEIVE HIGH-LEVEL FOREIGN VISITORS IN PEKING FOR THE MOMENT. ALTHOUGH SENATOR MANSFIELD WILL ARRIVE IN PEKING ON SEPTEMBER 24, HE IS SCHEDULED TO DEPART THE FOLLOWING MORNING FOR ANOTHER LEG OF HIS PROVINCIAL TOUR; ANY HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS WILL PRESUMABLY BE DEFERRED UNTIL HIS RETURN TO PEKING OCTOBER 7-10. THE CHINESE HAVE NOT YET PROVIDED US A FIRM ITINERARY FOR DR. SCHLESINGER'S DELEGATION, NOW TRAVELING IN THE WESTERN PROVINCES.

6. COMMENT: OBSERVANCE OF AN EXTENDED MOURNING PERIOD NOT ONLY SERVES TO EMPHASIZE THE DEPTH OF CHINESE GRIEF; IT ALSO AFFORDS

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AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHINESE LEADERS TO GET TOGETHER OUT OF THE LIMELIGHT FOR DISCUSSION OF THE VARIOUS ISSUES NOW CONFRONTING THEM. GATES

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